of gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) to gross advances for the banking system reduced from 14.4 per cent in 1998 to 3.48 per cent in March, 2006. The reform measures have also resulted in an improvement in the profitability of banks. The Return on Assets (RoA) of the banks rose from 0.4 per cent in the year 1991-92 to 0.88 percent in March 2006. Considering that globally, the RoA has been in the range of 0.9 to 1.5 per cent for 2004, Indian banks are well placed. The banking sector reforms also emphasized the need to renew the manpower resources and rationalize the requirements by drawing a realistic plan so as to reduce the operating cost and improve profitability.

Simplification of tax laws

1542. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR: SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to simplify tax laws and streamline procedure to bring more people into the tax net and cut the fiscal deficit;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when, the proposal is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Government's policy is to broaden the tax base while moving towards moderate tax rates and reducing dispersal in rates. The emphasis is to undertake reforms to move towards rationalization and simplification of the tax structure, procedures and rules/regulations. So far as direct taxes are concerned, an Expert Group has been constituted to prepare as draft for a simplified income-tax code, The Group is expected to submit its report shortly.

Application of Loans under Swaran Jayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana

† 1543. MS. SUSHILA TIRIYA: SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of poor persons who have applied in various banks till

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.